

# Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



MAY 2015

- **Lakewood:**  
Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader, JoAnn Wise, Budget Admin
- **Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora:** Krystal Phillips, Wildlife Biologist, Dustin Casady, Bio Tech
- **Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs:** Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist
- **US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs:** Brian Mhlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Steve Wallace, Forestry Technician, Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist
- **Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park:** Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist
- **Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY:** Timothy Grosch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- **McConnell Air Force Base:** Laura Mendenhall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- **Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO:** Clark Jones, Wildlife Biologist

## Leadership in Science and Technology

**Wildland Fire Risk Assessment:** Diane Strohm and Steve Wallace partnered with Colorado State University's Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML) and the USAF Wildland Fire Center to conduct a Wildland Fire Risk Assessment to assess threats posed by wildland fire to Academy assets. Steve helped assemble data to support the analysis, including vegetation types, fire history, infrastructure, etc. The week-long assessment included a stakeholder meeting to discuss and



prioritize assets. A comprehensive report by CEMML will be utilized in an upcoming revision of the Academy Wildland Fire Management Plan.



**Urban Forest Canopy:** Laura Mendenhall used iTree Canopy software to characterize the urban canopy at McConnell Air Force Base. Mendenhall classified 1000 pixels across the base's urban boundaries to characterize the urban forest canopy contributions to air quality using averages from Sedgwick County. These "tree benefit estimates" include dollar values for annual carbon dioxide sequestration, ozone removal, and particulate matter removal. This study is one component of a larger effort to define the base's urban forest and derive recommendations for long term management.

## Partnerships and Accountability

**FE Warren's Annual Arbor Day Celebration:** Tim Grosch and Andy McKinley met with Melissa Fertig from Balfour Beatty Communities to discuss FEWs annual Arbor Day celebration. Civil Engineering partners with Balfour Beatty every year for this event which will be held June 24, 2015. The event will kick off with an opening statement from the new Wing Commander Col. Kravitsky designating F. E. Warren AFB as a Tree City USA

location. This will be the 26th year FEW has received this award.

**I-25 Habitat Mitigation Project:** Brian Mhlbachler met with Colorado Department of Transportation and Kiewitt Construction representatives to discuss deficiencies with their Interstate 25 habitat mitigation project on Middle Tributary. Subsequent flood damage will require additional assessment and action to develop a stable stream

channel that can facilitate CDOT's Preble's habitat mitigation compliance requirements.



## Steve Wallace Retires!



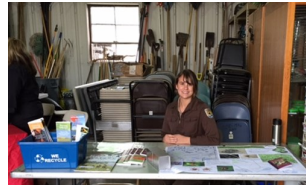
We say goodbye to our valued Forestry Technician Steve Wallace, who retired at the end of May. Steve worked with the Academy Natural Resources staff for 22 years, preceded by six years with the USFS. We will miss him, and wish him the best in his retirement. Thanks Steve!

## Partnerships and Accountability con't

*Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP):* Max Canestorp has Completed the Schriever AFB INRMP and obtained signatures from the agency cooperators, FWS and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Max has also completed a update for the Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station INRMP. within military lands. *Bird Airstrike Hazard (BASH) Activities.* There was not a monthly stakeholders meeting was held in May 2015. However, in support of the installation BASH program Krystal assisted Air Force Environmental Fight

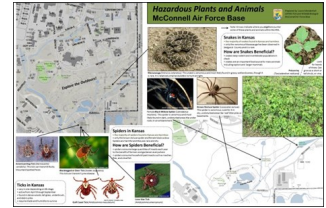
Chief to develop current maps of wildlife barrier fence locations and historical project costs to be briefed to higher installation leadership.

*Hazardous Wildlife.:* Laura Mendenhall developed a poster to educate McConnell Air Force



Base personnel and their families on hazardous wildlife and plants found in Sedgwick County.

Mendenhall discussed wildlife and plants with over 70 people during an Outdoor Recreation



open house, many of whom learned that only one of the many snake species found in Sedgwick County is venomous (*Massasauga*, *Sistrurus catenatus*).

## Habitat Conservation and Management

*Fish Passage:* Pam Sponholtz, along with Wayne Stancil (Region 6 Fish Passage Engineer) met with City of Longmont and Boulder County Open Space and Parks to discuss two large fish passage projects on the St. Vrain River. FWS is completing the 30% design phase for this project which will provide passage to several native fish species.

*Rainbow trout stocking:* Melissa stocked the academy lakes with 1,450 Lbs. of Rainbow Trout. The fish were distributed between the 5 lakes on the USAF Academy; this included the three Kettle Lakes, Deadmans, and Ice Lake. Farish Recreational Area was also stocked with 1,000 Lbs. of Rainbow Trout distributed between the three lakes on the grounds.



*Beetle-infested tree removal:* Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm stepped up surveys for trees infested by Ips engraver beetles. Since the first flight of the year is typically the most damaging, field inventory to locate these trees has been a top priority over the past two months. Infested trees are cut and de-barked with limbs chipped or finely lopped and scattered to kill the developing brood. Approximately 100 infested pines have been removed already this year. Recent

rains should reduce future tree mortality.

*Toadflax in Wyoming.:* Tim Grosch met with members of the Inter-Agency Weed and Pest Team to discuss current weed/pest issues occurring in the state of Wyoming. This meeting was particularly important because emphasis was on dalmatian toadflax which is prevalent and an ongoing issue to FEW. A toadflax field day has been scheduled June 16<sup>th</sup> to visit toadflax control test sites that

USDA Agricultural Research Service has been conducting for several years at the High Plains Grasslands Research Station



# Species Conservation and Management

*Green Lineage of Cutthroat Trout:* Chris Kennedy worked on a greenback cutthroat trout broodstock program at the Leadville National Fish hatchery. Three site visits were made to the hatchery during the month to attend a meeting to develop a research protocol, to sort fish into treatment groups and to inject fish with hormones. Additional time was spent on developing spawning logistics and creation of data sheets.

Chris has also been working on Species Status Assessment (SSA) for the green lineage of



cutthroat trout. The SSA will incorporate the known life history and its habitat needs, its current status and projections for the future resiliency. The completed SSA will be used as base of information to make formal Fish and Wildlife Service decisions on the line-

age.

Finally, Chris also co-authored a manuscript which is entitled "The genetic legacy of more than a century of stocking trout: a case study in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, USA" and it was accepted for publication in the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. explained by source and intensity of stocking.

*Burrowing owl surveys:* Max Canestorp conducted burrowing owl surveys on Schriever AFB.

## Habitat Conservation and Management Cont.

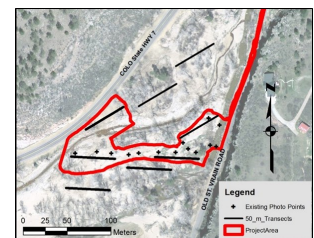
*Seedling sowing request:* Diane Strohm assessed potential reforestation needs for 2017-2018, and submitted a seedling sowing request to the USFS Bessey Nursery to grow trees for future planting. The Academy has an MOA with the USFS to store seed and grow seedlings as needed. These ponderosa pine and Douglas fir seedlings will be cultivated from seed collected from various elevations on the Academy to maximize adaptability to planting sites.

*User-friendly Maps.*

Brian and Melissa installed seven kiosks on the Academy's recreational trail system that will be used to post maps, wildlife information, and other safety/security messages. Brian is working with the Information Technology staff to create large-scale, user-friendly maps of the Falcon Trail, Eagle Peak, and Farish Recreation Area.

*Wildlife Barrier Fence Project:* The installation of a metal wildlife barrier skirt on existing perimeter fence is one wildlife management strategy Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) employs to ensure wildlife species such as black-tailed prairie dogs, coyotes, and rabbits, are effectively managed in unimproved areas per the approved BAFB Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. Krystal effectively teamed and coordinated with the City of Aurora in order to gain property right of entry to continue an existing wildlife barrier fencing agreement on the installation perimeter with the Center for Environmental Management on Military Lands (CEMML). Krystal innovatively and properly utilized multi-source funding to ensure project completion prior to the agreement suspense of 30 September 2015. Additionally, Krystal ensured Air Force installation level work request and dig permit were properly coordinated and approved prior to earth moving events for the wildlife barrier fence installation and repairs.

*Vegetation Restoration Monitoring:* Clark Jones designed a vegetation monitoring protocol for the Meadow/South Ledge Ditch and Fish Passage Project on the South St. Vrain River near Lyons, CO.



This project will assess vegetation recovery in Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse habitat disturbed during restoration activities. This protocol will be implemented annually for three growing season and is being conducted in collaboration with Boulder County Parks and Open Space.



# Species Conservation and Management

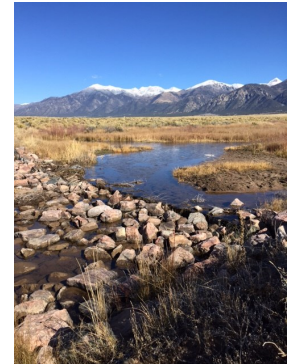
*National Environmental Policy Act:* Krystal Phillips reviewed Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process assessing environmental impacts to biological resources for future projects on Buckley Air Force Base.

*Another Green Back Cutthroat Trout (GBCT) Publication:* At the request of Kevin Rogers, Colorado Aquatic Research Scientist, Krystal is assisting with a species status publication on the cutthroat trout populations. Krystal met with Kevin to work through database data to streamline information so statistical analysis can be effectively performed for the publication.

*Invertebrate Survey.* Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) is located in the Colorado Front Range, which is a region known to support a diverse terrestrial and aquatic Arthropoda fauna. In May, Krystal finalized the Colorado Natural Heritage Program partnership field survey schedule and submitted critical installation access request forms to support invertebrate survey dates in June through August.

*Baca NWR fish passage surveys:* Pam Sponholtz and Wayne Stancil (Region 6 Fish Passage Engineer) measured culverts and road crossings that are thought

to be barriers to upstream movement to Rio Grande sucker and chub. Funding has been received from the National Fish Passage Program to fix some of these issues.



## Habitat Conservation and Management Cont.

*Raptor Release at Pueblo Chemical Depot:* A rehabilitated Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) was released on Pueblo Chemical Depot in May during the depot's belated Earth Day festivities. The Prairie Falcon was a previously injured adult female that was rehabilitated by the Pueblo Nature and Raptor Center.



*Prescribed Grazing:* Clark Jones met with the Pueblo Chemical Depot Land Reuse Authority to discuss reintroducing grazing activities to Pueblo Chemical Depot. Grazing previously took place on the depot, but was ceased in the late 1990s because of overgrazing that resulted in

in damage to ground cover.

Since that time vegetation conditions have improved and ecological indicators point to the need to reintroduce a limited disturbance regime to the landscape. Recommendations for grazing prescriptions will be based on a long-term grazing study conducted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program over a 10-year period.

*Invasive Species Management:* Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) employs the use of biocontrols to control targeted invasive plant species. Historically, TX AgriLife conducts site surveys and releases insect's targeted for the invasive plants on BAFB. This year's targeted focus is on leafy spurge. Krystal finalized the TX AgriLife partnership field schedule and submitted critical installation access request forms to support survey dates in June through October.

*SCA AmeriCorps Natural Resource Internships:* The national agreement between the USFWS and Student Conservation Association (SCA) serves to support America's conservation corps by providing college and high school-aged members with hands-on conservation service opportunities. By merging several COFWCO military projects on Air Force installations regarding habitat conservation and management, Krystal was successfully able to support and offer up to four natural resource internships to accomplish invasive plant species management; trail maintenance; and wildlife barrier habitat modification. Krystal continued to coordinate with SCA staff and applicants to hire interns; duties included – ten (10) application reviews; six (6) interviews; logistical field planning; and accomplish timesheet approvals. In addition, Krystal organized one (1) day of on the job training for two (2) interns in the program area of water quality conservation.